

Demographic Predictors of Work Ethics in a South African Sample

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Abstract

Ethical behavior in South Africa, and consequently in the workplace, is currently a highly topical issue. Hence it was decided to investigate whether demographic differences exist regarding work ethics, in order to guide organizational decision-making and to understand work behavior in a South African sample. The sample consisted of 301 respondents, and data was collected using the Multidimensional Work Ethics Profile (MWEP), which was developed to measure seven facets of work ethics. Inferential statistical analysis was performed to analyze the dataset. The results indicate that male respondents scored higher on delay of gratification in comparison to their female counterparts. Test results for tenure found that increased years of service influenced respondents' scores positively in hard work and delay of gratification.

Keywords

work ethics – South Africa – gender – race – highest academic qualification

1 Introduction

Within the South African context, ethical behavior in society as well as the workplace is a growing public concern, and consequently has been ranked among the top ten burning issues faced by the citizenry (Jonck and Swanepoel 2016). Tooley and Mahoai (2007, 367) paint the following gloomy scene of ethical behavior in South African society: *"when in a society the shameless triumph; when the abuser is admired; when principles end and opportunism prevails; when the insolent rule and people tolerate it; when everything becomes corrupt but the majority is quiet because their slice is waiting."* Patel (2013) noted that South African society, which recently celebrated 23 years of democracy, is rife with unethical behavior, mainly in the form of corruption, through bribery, which seems to have reached epidemic proportions. Despite dramatic changes that have occurred, particularly in the field of business management, including black economic empowerment, globalization, a decline in economic growth, and skills shortages (Bisschoff and Fullerton 2011), employees and managers are required to make day-to-day decisions in the workplace, where they often experience great difficulty distinguishing between right and wrong. The recent Marikana mining massacre is a prime example of how a decision that was made led to the death of 44 South Africans (De Waal 2012). This is only one of many examples which are reported every day in the South African media, which might point to deterioration in ethical behavior and decision-making. However, Bisschoff and Fullerton (2011) noted in their research study that managers within the South African context have a more ethical predisposition in comparison to their predecessors. In spite of this, the study confirmed that there is ample room for improvement.

Corresponding to global trends, employees in South Africa are increasingly being placed under pressure in the workplace, which often results in cutting of corners, breaking of rules and involvement in questionable practices (Robbins et al. 2009). Vyas-Doorgapersad (2007) asserts that developing countries such as South Africa are more susceptible to unethical behavior, due to widespread poverty, relatively low public sector compensation, a lack of risk identification mechanisms, opportunities created by complex, poorly defined, continually changing and inadequate rules and regulations, a lack of properly established laws and principles, a lack of institutions to enforce codes of conduct, and an absence of watchdog agencies.

In light of the increase in unethical behavior, work ethics would seem to be the antithesis of this. As such, Ali (2013) hypothesized that in a world characterized by turbulence, work ethics assume economic and social significance, in that economic gratification at any cost is a sign of deteriorating work ethics. The origin and the makeup of the construct of ethics have been contested for

thousands of years, with many philosophers offering divergent definitions of the topic. Although not all scholars agree, it seems reasonable to conclude that the concept of “ethics” is derived from the Greek word *ethos*, which originally referred to customs, habitual conduct, usages, and character (Melden 1967). The essence of work ethics is defined as the collective mind-set of a society, which is manifested in the desire to be in control of an internalized destiny, the quest for renewal and innovation, and reflection beyond current potential toward imagined new opportunities (Ali 2013). It should be noted that the concepts of “ethics” and “morality” are often used to explain each other, or they are used interchangeably, but the two concepts appear to be different. This is confirmed by Chidi, Ogunyomi, and Badejo (2012), who state that “ethics” refers mainly to an individual’s character, while “morality” refers to customs or manners and is usually applied to acts constituting overt behavior.

Chow and Choi (2003) assert that demographic variables are statistically significant predictors of ethical behavior. Despite the significance of these variables, there is a paucity of current research specifically on demographic variables that might predict work ethics or ethical behavior, particularly in the workplace. This lack of available research is even more evident within the South African context, where to date no research study could be identified that has investigated the demographic variables that might predict work ethics. Against this background, the primary objective of the research paper is to determine the influence of selected demographic variables on work ethics for a South African sample. Thus, would demographic variables, such as race or gender influence the prevalence of work ethics?

2 Theoretical Framework

According to Kaptein and Wempe (2011), three competing theoretical approaches to the study of ethics can be identified, namely consequentialism, deontology, and virtue ethics. It would appear that the main difference between these approaches can be found in the respective focus of each approach. As such, consequentialism focuses mainly on the outcome, or consequence, of an action, while deontology underscores the action itself. By contrast, virtue ethics focuses on the intention behind the action.

3 Consequential Theories of Ethics

Consequential theories of ethics focus on the moral gratification of an action, which is determined by the real and the expected consequences of an action

(Kaptein and Wempe 2011). Consequentialist ethics is also referred to as “teleological ethics,” due to these theories’ emphasis on the outcome, or the ‘end’ result. In this regard, Fisher and Lovell (2006, 124) state that the “rightness or goodness of an action is not intrinsic to that action but can only be judged by its consequences.” Peterson (2008, 3) concurs, confirming that teleology is concerned with the consequences of an overt action, and, as such, he referred to teleology as “from the ends.” Thus, according to consequential, or teleological, theories, ethicality as an action is determined by its outcome. Within the teleological theoretical paradigm, two different approaches can be distinguished, namely egoism, which is a perspective of personal consequences, and utilitarianism, which is a perspective of social consequences (Racelis 2013).

According to the *egoistic theory of ethics*, one needs to consider whether an action is morally good or otherwise, in other words to establish the pain or the pleasure that one will derive as a result of the action (Kaptein and Wempe 2011). Fisher and Lovell (2006, 127) explain this theory as considering the “greatest happiness principle” as “the foundation of morals.” The egoistic paradigm highlights the “maximization of shareholders’ wealth,” thus emphasizing “the greatest happiness for the largest possible number of people,” at times ignoring individual human rights in the process (Racelis 2013, 20). Thus, the theory holds that an action is ethically correct if it results in the happiness of society, and that it is wrong if it does not result in the happiness of society (Fisher and Lovell 2006).

The *theory of utilitarianism* mainly refers to the usefulness of an act. Thus, when determining whether an action is ethical, consideration should be given to what a particular decision or act will lead to, thus the outcome. If the decision or act leads to a great amount of good, the decision or act will be regarded as ethical. Racelis (2013) asserts that utilitarianism only takes into consideration the act itself, the agent’s character, and past occurrences or traditions that have a bearing on the act, which are irrelevant except insofar as they have an effect on the action. Kaptein and Wempe (2011) state that in utilitarianism, the morality of an action is judged based on whether the consequences of the action have brought happiness to society. Thus, when faced with an ethical decision, the right decision will be the one that leads to the greatest good. Within the utilitarian theory, a sub-theory can be identified which focuses mainly on the application of rules or policies. Kaptein and Wempe (2011) refer to this theory as “rule utilitarianism,” according to which every action should be judged separately on the basis of the criterion of the common good. Rule utilitarianism is mainly concerned with the rule that forms the basis of the decision or act, which should be used to judge the decision or act in terms of its utility for society.

4 Deontological Theories of Ethics

Quick and Nelson (2009) state that deontological theories of ethics focus on the act itself, rather than its effects. Those who subscribe to the tenets of deontology (also referred to as “rule-based ethics”) assume that every individual has certain obligations, which are informed by different kinds of indisputable rights (Kaptein and Wempe 2011). Therefore, an action will be regarded as ethical if it was committed as a result of a certain duty, or if it conforms to a moral norm.

Many scholars are of the opinion that the theory proposed by Kant (1785) is “deontology personified” (Dierksmeier 2013, 3). In Kant’s seminal work titled *Groundworks of the Metaphysics of Morals*, the author elaborates on the following: (a) duty as the cornerstone of ethicality, (b) the notion that ethical behavior must be a result of respect for moral law, (c) for moral action to be valid, consideration of probable outcomes is irrelevant, and (d) the notion that a disdainful disregard for results is the trademark of a good conscience (Dierksmeier 2013). Kant’s (1785) theory states that all moral rules can be traced back to a general rule, which can be called the “categorical imperative” (Kaptein and Wempe 2011, 13). According to Fisher and Lovell (2006), a categorical imperative refers to a command or principle that must be obeyed, without exception. Kant (1785) argued that an individual should place themselves in the position of another individual and ask themselves whether they would make a similar decision if placed in that situation (Quick and Nelson 2011).

5 Virtue Ethics Theory

Virtue ethics theory, also known as character theories of ethics, is premised on Aristotle’s popular doctrine of virtue as a mean. This implies that acting virtuously requires behavior on an appropriate intermediate level between two extremes (Racelis 2013). Virtues are referred to as “personal qualities that provide the basis for individuals to lead a good, noble or happy life” (Fisher and Lovell 2006, 101). Racelis (2013) defines virtue as a disposition to choose according to a rule, namely the rule by which a truly virtuous man with inherent moral insight would choose. According to Kaptein and Wempe (2011), virtue ethics underscores the traits of the individual in question, rather than judging moral obligations in terms of the action, or the consequences of the action.

An understanding of the various theoretical paradigms seems necessary, since it increases one’s awareness of the different ways in which individuals distinguish between right and wrong. If organizational leadership takes

cognizance of different ethical theories, it is likely to improve their understanding of employees' behavior at work. In the following section, ethics will be discussed in the context of work, that is, work ethics.

6 Work Ethics

Due to the fact that the distinction between right and wrong has become increasingly blurred, employees are faced with ethical dilemmas on a daily basis (Robbins et al. 2009). Bergh and Theron (2009) define work ethics as a productive orientation which refers to valuing work as compulsory and a worthwhile life interest in order to achieve certain objectives. Miller, Woehr, and Hudspeth (2002), as well as Ravangard et al. (2014), assert that work ethics encompasses attitudes and beliefs concerning work behavior, and is a multidimensional construct reflected in behavior. Work values is associated with work and work-related activities, but work ethics, as such, refers to attitudes and beliefs, as opposed to behavior. Thus, employees' work ethics might be regarded as the overall framework from which work values emanate, which, in turn, influences individuals' behavior at work. According to Fox (2006), ethical behavior forms the foundation of all managerial actions, and is crucial in developing countries such as South Africa. Most literature on work ethics is principally founded on the Protestant work ethic, which, for the most part, includes a belief in hard work, asceticism, and industriousness (Tang and Weatherford 1998). Furnham and Muhiudeen (1984) provide a description of the Protestant work ethic based on the seminal work of Weber titled *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, which encompassed asceticism, hard work, thrift, frugality, and delay of gratification, to mention a few. Stones and Philbrick (2001) noted that there is a paucity of systematic exploration of the Protestant work ethic in African cultures. Against the stated background it should be taken into consideration that in the research under discussion, work ethics is premised principally on the dominant paradigm as articulated within the Western and Anglo-American political and economic philosophy (Dawson 2005) as compared to other types of ethical traditions. In the current study, work ethics is measured as consisting of seven components, namely self-reliance, morality, leisure, hard work, centrality of work, wasted time, and delay of gratification.

7 Review of Previous Research

A review of the body of knowledge concerning work ethics and gender yielded the following findings. Furnham and Muhiudeen (1984) found gender

differences in terms of the Protestant work ethic, with female respondents scoring higher than their male counterparts. Van Hoorn and Maseland (2013) compared employed and unemployed male respondents in terms of the Protestant work ethic; they found differences, in that employed males scored higher than unemployed males. The study by Furnham and Muhiudeen (1984) did not indicate the specific dimension that female respondents scored higher on. Fisman and O'Neill (2009) indicate robust gender differences in the work ethics sub-construct of hard work. Regarding work ethics and race, Bhagat (1979) reported racial differences between African-American and white respondents in work ethics. Similarly, in a more recent study, DeSante (2013) found racial differences in work ethics. As such, white respondents were rewarded for the same level of work ethics, while black respondents were punished for perceived laziness. Davis and Welton (1991) reported that years of service did not have a statistically significant influence on work ethics, while Serwinek (1992) found that longer service correlates with a higher degree of work ethics. Lastly, regarding work ethics and highest academic qualification, Chow and Choi (2003) reported that purchasing managers with higher levels of education demonstrated more ethical behavior than others. However, it should be noted that ethical behavior is more related to work values than to work ethics. As such, Ravangard et al. (2014) assert that work values is associated with work and work-related activities, but that work ethics, as such, refers to attitudes and beliefs, as opposed to behavior. Against this background, the research objective of the study was to establish whether gender, race, tenure, and highest academic qualification are statistically significantly related to work ethics.

8 Research Methodology

The following research methodology was utilized to investigate the influence of selected demographic variables on work ethics in a South African sample.

9 Research Design

The objective as set for this research was achieved through the use of a cross-sectional descriptive research design. The research design can be classified as a cross-sectional design, firstly, due to the fact that data gathering took place once without repeat measures (Field and Buitendach 2011). Secondly, the research was descriptive in nature as the aim was to describe a population phenomenon as accurately as possible at a specific point in time (Salkind 2012). Additionally, it should be noted that the design was also an *ex post facto* design,

because respondents represented the different sociodemographic variables prior to data collection. Thus, respondents were not randomly assigned to pre-determined groupings.

10 Research Hypotheses

The overarching substantive research hypothesis stated that “sociodemographic variables statistically significantly influence the perceived work ethics of a sample of South African employees.” This overarching research hypothesis was further subdivided into the following specific research hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1: Gender statistically significantly influences the work ethics of a South African sample.

Hypothesis 2: Race statistically significantly influences the work ethics of a South African sample.

Hypothesis 3: Tenure (years of service) statistically significantly influences the work ethics of a South African sample.

Hypothesis 4: Highest academic qualification statistically significantly influences the work ethics of a South African sample.

11 Research Participants and Approach

The study made use of non-probability sampling, specifically convenience sampling, as a way of producing the sample. The research hypotheses as stated above were empirically tested using a sample size of 301 respondents, which consisted of employees working in the same geographical area of South Africa. The overall sample consisted of 112 male (37.2%) and 188 (62.5%) female respondents. The racial distribution of the sample was as follows: black African respondents ($n = 275$; 91.4%), white respondents ($n = 17$; 5.6%), mixed-race respondents ($n = 7$; 2.3%), and Indian or Asian respondents ($n = 1$; 0.3%). The overwhelming majority of the sample had between 0 and 5 years of service ($n = 247$; 82.06%), followed by those respondents who had between 6 and 10 years of service ($n = 24$; 8%) and respondents with 15 or more years of service ($n = 17$; 5.6%). The sample was varied in terms of highest academic qualification, namely below Grade 12 ($n = 10$; 3.3%), Grade 12 ($n = 189$; 62.8%), a national diploma ($n = 70$; 23.3%), an honors and/or bachelor degree ($n = 23$; 7.6%), a master's qualification ($n = 7$; 2.3%), and a doctoral qualification ($n = 1$; 0.3%).

A self-administered quantitative questionnaire was distributed to participants. It should be noted that 540 questionnaires were distributed, which

translates to a response rate of 55.7%. After distribution, the researcher collected the questionnaires within an allotted time frame of 14 days, providing respondents with sufficient time to complete the questionnaire at their leisure. After completion, respondents were requested to place their completed questionnaire in a sealed envelope, and the questionnaires were collected at a central point. This ensured that the questionnaires were treated confidentially. Other ethical considerations that were adhered to included informed and signed consent, anonymity, and voluntary participation.

12 Measuring Instrument

Work ethics was assessed by means of the Multidimensional Work Ethics Profile (MWEP), which was developed by Miller and colleagues in 2002. The MWEP is a 65-item scale that was developed to measure seven conceptually distinct facets of work ethics, namely hard work, self-reliance, leisure, centrality of work, morality/ethics, delay of gratification, and wasted time (Miller et al. 2002). Respondents were requested to select the most applicable option from a five-point Likert scale, with options ranging from “strongly agree” to “strongly disagree”. The MWEP has demonstrated sound psychometric properties, as stated by Miller et al. (2002), and as is evident from the high internal consistency of the seven dimensions, with Cronbach's alphas exceeding 0.7. Van Ness et al. (2010) reported the following Cronbach's alphas for the individual scales: self-reliance (0.89), morality/ethics (0.77), leisure (0.90), hard work (0.89), centrality of work (0.85), wasted time (0.79), and delay of gratification (0.81). In the study under discussion, the total MWEP scale had an inter-item correlation of 0.94.

Four biographical variables were included in the study, namely gender, race, tenure, and highest academic qualification, since they were likely to covary with the work ethics that were controlled for. An acknowledge caveat is the absence of religion as variable that might influence work ethics. Malone, Hartman and Payne (1998) noted that religion in the workplace is complex, involving various employment considerations as a result religion was not included in the current study.

13 Statistical Analysis

A Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was performed to assess the normality of the distribution (Pallant 2011). Razali and Wah (2011) underscored the importance of determining the normality of a distribution as the aforementioned represents

the underlying assumption of the majority of statistical tests. Thus when the normality assumption is violated, the interpretation and inferences made might not be valid or reliable emphasizing the keystone analytical value. The results indicated that the data was not normally distributed. Hence, non-parametric tests were used to investigate the research hypotheses. As such, the Mann-Whitney U test and the Kruskal-Wallis test were executed to determine the influence of the sociodemographic variables on the dependent variable (i.e. work ethics). To determine the reliability of the measuring instruments, Cronbach's alpha coefficients were calculated.

14 Findings

Table 1 presents the results of the Mann-Whitney U test for gender as the independent variable and work ethics as the dependent variable.

Gender was statistically significantly related to work ethics, particularly for delay of gratification ($p \leq 0.05$). In terms of delay of gratification, the male respondents had a higher mean ranking (mean = 166.49) than their female counterparts (mean = 140.97). The median for females was 2.2, and for males it was 2. Thus, the male respondents valued delay of gratification more than the female respondents.

The Kruskal-Wallis test results for work ethics as the dependent variable and race as the independent variable are depicted in Table 2 below.

TABLE 1 Mann-Whitney U test results for work ethics as the dependent variable and gender as the independent variable

Variable	Level of the variable	Mann-Whitney	Z-score	P
Work ethics	Self-reliance	9719.00	-1.115	0.265
	Morality/ethics	10220.50	-0.348	0.728
	Leisure	9022.50	-1.487	0.137
	Hard work	9223.00	-1.800	0.072
	Centrality of work	10377.00	0.208	0.835
	Wasted time	10431.50	-0.133	0.894
	Delay of gratification	8737.00	-2.471	0.013*

* $p \leq 0.05$

** $p \leq 0.01$

TABLE 2 Kruskal-Wallis test results for work ethics as the dependent variable and race as the independent variable

Variable	Level of the variable	Chi-square	DF	P
Work ethics	Self-reliance	2.675	3	0.444
	Morality/ethics	2.926	3	0.403
	Leisure	4.798	3	0.187
	Hard work	3.019	3	0.389
	Centrality of work	5.681	3	0.128
	Wasted time	6.205	3	0.102
	Delay of gratification	3.009	3	0.390

* $p \leq 0.05$
** $p \leq 0.01$

According to Table 2 above, the variable of race was not statistically significantly related to any of the work ethics measured. It should, however, be noted that even though the sample corresponded to the racial distribution in South Africa, it consisted mostly of black African respondents.

The Kruskal-Wallis test results for work ethics as the dependent variable and years of service, or tenure, as the independent variable are presented in Table 3 below.

TABLE 3 Kruskal-Wallis test results for work ethics as the dependent variable and years of service as the independent variable

Variable	Level of the variable	Chi-square	DF	P
Work ethics	Self-reliance	6.950	4	0.139
	Morality/ethics	0.381	4	0.984
	Leisure	7.560	4	0.109
	Hard work	17.412	4	0.002**
	Centrality of work	5.207	4	0.267
	Wasted time	0.820	4	0.936
	Delay of gratification	20.682	4	0.000**

* $p \leq 0.05$
** $p \leq 0.01$

The work ethics that were statistically significantly related to years of service were hard work ($p = 0.002$) and delay of gratification ($p = 0.000$). The following mean ranking scores were recorded for the work ethics subscale of hard work: 133.67 for the category of 0-1 years of service, 148.17 for those respondents with between 2 and 5 years of service, 183.65 for the category of 6-10 years of service, 161.13 for respondents with between 11 and 15 years of service, and 211.18 for respondents with 15-plus years of service. According to these results, hard work was highly regarded by respondents with more than 15 years of service, followed by respondents with between 6 and 10 years of service and respondents with between 11 and 15 years of service. As can be expected, respondents with less than five years of service scored the lowest in terms of hard work. Delay of gratification had the following mean ranking scores: 133.02 for respondents with between 0 and 1 year of service, 145.51 for those with between 2 and 5 years of service, 198.75 for the category of 6-10 years of service, 200.38 for those with 11-15 years of service, and 194.32 for the category of 15-plus years of service. Thus, respondents with between 11 and 15 years of service valued delay of gratification the most, followed by respondents with between 6 and 10 years of service and those with more than 15 years of service. Once again, respondents with less than a year of service scored the lowest in terms of delay of gratification.

The Kruskal-Wallis test results for work ethics as the dependent variable and educational level as the independent variable are depicted in Table 4. The results show no statistically significant influence of highest academic qualification on work ethics (see Table 4).

TABLE 4 Kruskal-Wallis test results for work ethics as the dependent variable and highest academic level as the independent variable

Variable	Level of the variable	Chi-square	DF	<i>P</i>
Work ethics	Self-reliance	4.964	5	0.420
	Morality/ethics	4.934	5	0.424
	Leisure	3.167	5	0.674
	Hard work	5.172	5	0.395
	Centrality of work	2.723	5	0.743
	Wasted time	4.152	5	0.528
	Delay of gratification	10.849	5	0.054

* $p \leq 0.05$
** $p \leq 0.01$

15 Discussion

Hypothesis 1: In terms of gender and work ethics, the results presented indicate a relationship between gender and the work ethics subscale of delay of gratification ($p = 0.013$), with males showing a higher mean ranking than their female counterparts. Delay of gratification relates to a future orientation and postponement of rewards (Miller et al. 2002), in other words sacrificing short-term rewards in order to achieve long-term objectives (Abd-El-Fattah and Al-Nabhani 2012). The results show that male respondents focus more on achieving long-term goals than on achieving short-term goals. The findings reported in this article only to some extent support previous research findings. For example, Fisman and O'Neill (2009) found robust gender differences in terms of the work ethics sub-construct of hard work. Based on the findings presented, the research hypothesis is accepted for the work ethics subscale of delay of gratification.

Hypothesis 2: Race did not have a statistically significant relationship with work ethics. As a result, the hypothesis as stated above is rejected. However, due to the homogeneity of the sample and the relatively small proportion of other population groups, a Type 2 error might have occurred. A Type 2 error occurs when a null hypothesis is falsely accepted (Pallant 2011), as might be the case with the demographic variable of race.

Hypothesis 3: The results indicate that work ethics was statistically significantly related to years of service, with specific reference to hard work and delay of gratification. It is not surprising that respondents with more than 15 years of service highly regard hard work. Likewise, delay of gratification increased with an increase in years of service. Chow and Choi (2003) explain that there are contradictory research results in terms of years of service. Serwinek (1992) found that longer service correlated with a higher degree of work ethics, while Davis and Welton (1991) reported no statistically significant influence on work ethics. Hence, the findings of the current study only partially support previous findings.

Hypothesis 4: Highest academic qualification did not have a statistically significant influence on work ethics. As a result, hypothesis 4 is rejected. Previous research findings contradict the findings presented in this paper, in that higher educational levels have been linked to increased ethical behavior (Chow and Choi 2003). However, it should be noted that the abovementioned study was not conducted within the South African context, and it was occupation-specific.

Furthermore, Dawson (2005) noted that Protestant work ethics is being superseded by the emergence of 'creative life-work' ethic. The emergence of the said is imbedded within employee's desire for recognition of creativity in all

spheres of life and would require a renewed focus on quality of employee relationships. Dawson (2005) additionally noted that 'creative life-work' ethics is cornerstone in corporate social responsibility.

16 Conclusion

The aim of the study was to determine whether some demographic variables are related to work ethics. The results indicate that only gender and tenure had a statistically significant relationship with work ethics. Delay of gratification had a statistically significant relationship with both gender and tenure, or years of service. These findings confirm the possible role that delay of gratification plays in unethical behavior. As such, in the absence of delay of gratification, the short-term benefits of engaging in unethical behavior might be greater than the long-term benefits associated with hard work and work ethics. Hard work was also found to be statistically significantly related to years of service. One possible reason for the aforementioned poor results might be that the measuring instrument used, which seems to be based on the Protestant work ethic, might be less applicable to African cultures. As corruption and unethical work behavior are increasingly being reported to the public (as a result of legislation that has been put in place, such as the Promotion of Access to Information Act), development and validation of a work ethics scale that is unique to the African context is essential.

At the heart of every African lies a spirit of togetherness, collectivism, and serving others (Taylor 2014). Therefore, it is not surprising that there is growing interest in the African philosophy of *Ubuntu*, which encompasses values such as harmony, humanity, sharing, compassion, respect, empathy, generosity, and caring (Matolino and Kwindigwi 2013; West 2014). These work values are in line with the current trend of viewing work ethics differently, as equated with higher-order values such as those mentioned, which lead to personal growth and meaningfulness (Van der Walt 2007). Furthermore, these spirituality-based values will contribute to the betterment of others, a community orientation, and social justice (Giacalone and Jurkiewicz 2003), which may possibly reduce unethical behavior. Therefore, it is recommended that future research should focus on investigating work ethics from an African perspective, based on indigenous knowledge and underpinned by African theories.

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